

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Municipalities (AS 37.05.315)****Grant Recipient: Anchorage****Project Title:**

Anchorage - Ship Creek Tourist and Cruise Passenger Salmon Learning Center

State Funding Requested: \$ 3,500,000**House District: Anchorage Areawide (17-32)**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

The Municipality will construct a Salmon Learning Center at the Anchorage Hatchery to improve visitor understanding of Alaska's Salmon Resources. Facilities will serve large volumes of cruise ship passengers.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$7,000,000**Funding Secured

Amount FY

Other Pending Requests

Amount FY

Anticipated Future Need

Amount FY

There is no other funding needed

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

In partnership with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG's) and the private sector, this project will construct a salmon and fishery education and information center adjacent to the ADF&G's new hatchery facility along Ship Creek in Anchorage. The proposed educational exhibits will include interactive interpretive kiosks, a living stream habitat, multipurpose aquatic resource learning and training centers, salmon viewing, and gift shop. The facility will support Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Salmon in the Classroom program, the MOA's Salmon in the City initiative, and private sector tourism, and convention and visitor business activities. It would be made available to community groups and other organizations for small group meetings, receptions, and other educational functions.

This project has strong support from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, tourism businesses, sport fishing interests and other stakeholders. Most recently, the Alaska Chapter of the American Institute of Architects has become intrigued by the project and is organizing a pro bono design charrette in January 2008. This event will help the State and the City further develop the design and venues for this important facility.

The hatchery facility in Anchorage attracts up to 60,000 visitors on an annual basis and does not provide a compelling visitor experience. The existing hatchery information and educational facilities cannot accommodate current visitations and cannot take advantage of a much larger expected visitor market of 120,000 people. Completion of the Salmon Learning Center provides an unparalleled opportunity to nourish a growing appetite for knowledge-based visitor experiences. In addition to tourists, the

facility would appeal to all Alaskans who care deeply about our salmon and aquatic resources.

Project Timeline:

Planning and Design can begin as soon as funds are available.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Municipality of Anchorage

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

Contact Name: Wigglesworth, David T.

Phone Number: 907-343-7116

Address:

Email:

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No



Municipality of Anchorage

P.O. Box 196650 • Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6650 • Phone: (907) 343-4365 • Fax: (907) 343-4318 • E-mail: www.muni.org

Office of Economic and Community Development

Mayor Mark Begich

Ship Creek Salmon Learning Center

The Ship Creek Salmon Learning Center provides an unparalleled opportunity to nourish a growing appetite for knowledge-based visitor experiences and appeal to all Alaskans who care deeply about our healthy salmon and aquatic resources. The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the visitor industry and other stakeholders share a common vision and mission for the center:

- Inspire life-long appreciation and stewardship of Alaska fisheries and aquatic resources;
- Sustain healthy fisheries and aquatic resources in Southcentral Alaska through excellence in education and delivery of scientifically sound information and interpretation;
- Serve the needs of schools, community groups, the public, and resource agencies throughout Alaska; and
- Cultivate strong partnership with the tourism and fishing sectors to educate Alaskans and visitors about the importance of salmon and healthy fisheries to the Alaska economy.

The Learning Center is one component of a larger Municipal sustainable salmon initiative, *Salmon in the City*. *Salmon in the City* is comprised of over two dozen organizations working together to increase stewardship of our salmon and aquatic resources and restore fish habitat.

The Learning Center concept has been part of the vision for Ship Creek for many years.

- In 1998, a Ship Creek Citizens Advisory Task Force and its 45-member advisory committee recommended a fishery center to serve as both an education center and a visitor attraction.
- In January 2008, the Alaska Chapter of the American Institute of Architects hosted a pro-bono design workshop to obtain additional public, agency and private sector (including visitor industry) input on the design and function of the Learning Center. Approximately 35 people, representing state and local agencies, the military, Alaska Fly Fishers, tourism sector, and the general public, participated in this one-day program.

Community, Security, Prosperity

- The City has in-hand several hundred signatures from residents living in Anchorage and southcentral Alaska supporting the Learning Center and/or the overall education goals of the *Salmon in the City* initiative.

The Ship Creek Salmon Learning Center is an opportunity for all Alaskans to celebrate and sustain our salmon legacy and demonstrate excellence in the stewardship of our fishery and aquatic resources.

Economic Benefits: Alaskans depend on salmon and marine resources for food, jobs, and recreation. Sport and commercial fishing, tourism, and other sectors of Alaska's economy all benefit from abundant salmon and healthy aquatic resources – providing substantial entry level and highly paid jobs for Alaskans. According to ADF&G, statewide recreational fishing and salmon viewing generates 11,000 jobs and \$238 million in wages for a total economic impact of approximately \$960 million.

Ship Creek, in Anchorage, is one of the most popular sport fishing and salmon viewing destinations in the State of Alaska. It is an ideal location for the Learning Center. In the heart of downtown Anchorage, the Ship Creek fishery receives an annual fishing effort of 40,000 -50,000 angler days and generates \$7.3 million in annual economic benefit to the State.

Statewide Education/Tourism Value: Investment in the Learning Center is part of an overall development strategy to take advantage of the popular Ship Creek fishery and to help make Anchorage's waterfront area attractive and accessible to residents and visitors.

The Center provides a tremendous opportunity to strengthen a Southcentral Alaska visitor experience and economy - by linking the Learning Center programs and venues to other visitor and convention industry destinations in the region (e.g. the Seward Sealife Center and projects implemented by the Mat-Su Basin Salmon Conservation Partnership).

ADF&G and other sustainable salmon partnerships in Mat-Su, Kenai, and Anchorage deliver several fishery public information and education programs. Yet, demand for these programs is increasing and existing salmon and aquatic resource information venues are limited in scope. Additional investment is required in order to provide a more compelling program to attract visitors and to fully engage the tourism sector. Some visitors to Alaska plan their trips around the annual Ship Creek salmon derbies and the tourism industry brings clients to Ship Creek to view salmon and watch the fishery.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Elmendorf hatchery facility in Anchorage is a popular attraction for tourists and residents - offering one of several premier sites along Ship Creek for locating the Learning Center. In any given year as many as 60,000 people visit the facility and marvel at salmon

viewing opportunities in nearby Ship Creek. The existing hatchery information and educational facilities cannot accommodate current visitations, are not designed to take advantage of a much larger expected visitor market of 120,000 people and cannot fully accommodate public access.

Proposed educational exhibits include interactive interpretive kiosks, a living stream habitat, multipurpose aquatic resource learning and training centers, salmon viewing, and gift shop. The facility will also support the needs of Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Salmon in the Classroom program, the MOA's Salmon in the City initiative and other salmon restoration programs in Southcentral Alaska. The facility would be made available to community groups and other organizations for small group meetings, receptions, and other educational functions.

Supports State and National salmon recovery efforts. The Learning Center is part of a comprehensive strategy to ensure the sustainability of pacific salmon and to build partnerships to help restore salmon habitat.

Since 1991, the National Marine Fisheries Service has listed 26 Evolutionarily Significant Units of Pacific salmon as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The geographic area covered by the listings roughly equivalent to the area of the State of California. The listings affect the entire West coast of the United States. The Learning Center can play in important education role in national salmon recovery activities. Effective national and statewide salmon recovery efforts will positively benefit Alaska's economy, tourism, Alaska native subsistence and the health of aquatic resources.

Match State Capital Funds: The \$3.5 million in state capital funds for the Learning Center will be matched 50% by several other sources including:

- Federal funds: The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport Fish Division is pledging \$2 million in federal funds to help fund design and construction of the Salmon Learning Center (Letter to Mayor Begich from ADF&G dated 2/5/2008).
- Private Foundations, Federal Agencies and Corporations: The City will secure the additional \$1.5 million in match from other sources. Preliminary funding discussions with private foundations, private companies (e.g. ConocoPhillips and visitor industry) and non-profit organizations have been extremely positive. The Alaska Railroad Corporation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and ConocoPhillips- Alaska have already contributed \$270,000 to rehabilitate eroded banks along the creek.
- City Funds: The Municipality of Anchorage has already invested \$5 million in federal funds to improve fishing access and fish passage along Ship Creek. Additional investment in the Learning Center will also be explored at the local level, as needed.